

SC PROJECT LEARNING TREE

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



PLT is an initiative of SFI Inc.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

In 2021, the SC PLT program was revitalized by new curriculum, new projects and resources to support educators, new facilitators, and by the reinstitution of in-person professional development (PD) events.

Project Learning Tree released a major revision to the PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide entitled, *Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide*.

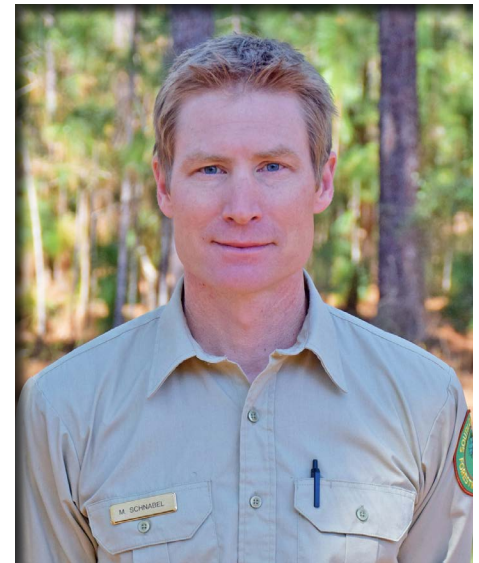
This new full-color guide is PLT's flagship curriculum and has many improvements including a new design, grade level organization of activities (K-2, 3-5, 6-8), outdoor learning options for every activity, academic standards connections, detailed units of instruction, and many new online tools to support the printed guide. Most important in my mind is that every activity has options for outdoor instruction (kids need to get outside more!) and "Forest Facts" for educators that "present interesting insights into forests as global solutions for environmental, economic, and social sustainability." SC PLT Facilitators were trained in how to lead PD events on the new guide during the summer and fall of 2021.

PLT's alignment to standards has been a logical reason for in-service teachers to incorporate our activities into their units of study and for school districts to allow SC PLT facilitators to lead PLT PD events at district in-service days. Through the support of a Sustainable Forestry Initiative Education Grant, the learning objectives from the activities in the new K-8 Explore



Your Environment and Focus on Forests guides were correlated and reverse correlated to the most recent SC academic standards in English language arts, science, math, and social studies. Many thanks to Dr. Rosemary Wicker (retired University of South Carolina) for your work on the correlations which are posted on the SC PLT website.

With so many changes and updates to the PLT program, new curriculum, and facilitators needing up-to-date resources, a new website was created to house everything a facilitator would need to lead PD



Matt Schnabel, SC PLT Coordinator

events. SC Project Learning Tree partnered with SC Project WET and Palmetto Project WILD to create a platform for facilitator resources for all programs entitled "SC Facilitators Home: Your EE Headquarters." On this Google website, facilitators can find resources such as sample agendas, presentations, the handbook, and other resources. Now facilitators will always have the most recent information needed at their fingertips!

SC Project Learning Tree offers professional development in in-person, blended (virtual & in-person), and virtual formats. Our state program currently has grant funding to offer trainings -free of charge- to pre-service educators studying education, students majoring in natural resources, in-service educators, and early childhood educators registered through DSS. In 2021, SC PLT received grant funding specifically for this purpose through the ee360 grant program and the International Paper Foundation grant through the IP Georgetown Mill.

Our active facilitators are the backbone of the program and are the key to its success. Twenty-six

facilitators and three facilitators-in-training (FIT) led 32 separate PD events across the state to train 359 new PLT educators. Many thanks to all the PLT facilitators that led PD events this year! Started in 2019, SC PLT implemented its “Facilitator Rewards Program” as a way to thank active Facilitators for their hard work leading PD events and promoting the PLT program. Facilitators earn points by facilitating PD events, helping at conferences, coordinating SC PLT EE Centers, or leading “teaser” presentations. Rewards range from gift certificates to an all-expense paid trip to the national PLT Coordinators’ Conference. This year the facilitators that were the most active were Sara Beth Freytag (Hobcaw Barony Discovery Center), Thea Hagan (Clemson University Forestry Department), and Taylor Rowe (Lynches River County Park). Thanks goes to all our facilitators for their dedication to the SC PLT program!

SC PLT is continuing to evolve as technology and the needs and desires of students and educators change. Our program is committed to hands-on, experiential learning that



gets students engaged in real-world projects. Thank you to all of you who have supported SC PLT with your time, money (thank you Georgia-Pacific and SC SFI Implementation

Committee for general fund donations), and skills and I ask for your continued support...WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!!!

ASSISTANT COORDINATOR'S CORNER

2021 was another successful year for SC PLT despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We received funding through the ee360 grant again this year to offer PLT PD events, free of charge, at our seven SC PLT EE Centers, as well as for in-service preK-12 and pre-service educators. The ee360 grant is a five-year initiative that supports environmental education leaders to help increase environmental literacy. The North American Association of Environmental

Education leads the initiative through a cooperative agreement with US Environmental Protection Agency and seven partner organizations. This funding has been a huge contributor to our state program's outreach success the last several years. It covers the costs of activity guides and allows us to continue to offer free PD events for our target groups. This was year five of a five-year agreement, and we have heard word from National PLT that ee360 will likely be continuing this initiative.



Beth Foley, SC Assistant PLT Coordinator



Matt and I took on a huge effort of reaching out to all the PLT facilitators on our contact list of nearly 200 volunteers that have been trained in our state. Many of these facilitators were trained 10 – 20 years ago and have not been involved with the SC PLT program in many years. Our goal was to reengage some of these inactive Facilitators but to also condense this list to volunteers who want to stay involved with the program. We were very fortunate that many facilitators were happy to reengage with PLT and even some SC Forestry Commission staff worked towards getting new Project Foresters trained as PLT educators.

With the release of the newly revised Explore Your Environment K-8 Activity Guide, we felt it was vital to get all our facilitators up to speed on the major changes, as this is PLT's most popular and versatile guide. We offered two in-person and one virtual "Facilitator Refresher" in which we led a PD event in the new K-8 guide, shared updates about the PLT program, as well as did a fun site tour for the in-person trainings. Our first refresher was in June at Roper Mountain Science Center in Greenville and the second was in July at Harbison State Forest in Columbia. The virtual

refresher was offered in September and recorded, which allowed facilitators who could not attend a live refresher to still receive this important information.

In 2021, SC PLT required all facilitators to complete three tasks by the end of the year, to keep their active status on our facilitator list. Facilitators needed to complete the online "Welcome to PLT!" facilitator course, attend an in-person or virtual facilitator refresher (or view the recording and complete an action plan), and complete the SC PLT Facilitator Survey. Our hope is these requirements will help ensure that our facilitators, who are an essential part of

PLT, are knowledgeable and confident in leading PD events, which will in turn strengthen the integrity of our state program.

Thank you to all of our SC PLT EE Centers who host an annual PLT PD event as well as loan out a Tree Trunk full of PLT materials to anyone who has been through an educator training. Our seven SC PLT EE Centers are: Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site, Harbison State Forest, Hobcaw Barony, Lynches River County Park, Museum of York County, Roper Mountain Science Center, and Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. A special thank you goes to the US Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service for hosting our Triple Facilitator Workshop at the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center.



How do you spell success?

- 23,042 SC educators trained in 1,122 workshops since 1980;
- Developed new in-person and virtual facilitator refresher options for annual training as well as online resources to support facilitators;
- Created new professional development resources for PLT's new K-8 *Explore Your Environment* activity guide.



About SC Project Learning Tree

Project Learning Tree is the environmental education program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and sponsored in South Carolina by the S.C. Forestry Commission, the State Department of Education, and the S.C. Forestry Foundation [a 509 (a) (3) non-profit organization].



Dodie Clark Named Outstanding Educator of the Year

Dodie Clark of Belton has been named the 2021 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee.

Clark serves as the children's library clerk at the main branch of the Anderson County Public Library.

"I see the power of PLT every time I use it," Clark said. "Because it helps my students, hikers and patrons make a personal connection with nature. I have used the PLT activity Adopt-A-Tree with my second graders where they have excitedly visited their adopted trees on the playground with their journals in-hand. I love PLT's incorporation of literature into the activities, especially the activity Trees for Many Reasons, to help build a stewardship ethic. My library patrons read the Lorax and realized 'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.'"

Clark was introduced to PLT in 2012 while attending Anderson University to earn her Master of Arts in Teaching in elementary education. In 2015 she attended the South Carolina Sustainable Forestry Teachers' Tour, which helped prepare her to incorporate PLT in her second-grade classroom at Anderson

Christian School.

During her time at Anderson Christian, her students participated in Adopt-a-Tree, engaging in fun educational PLT activities and journaling about the trees they adopted on campus.

In 2017 Clark became a certified PLT Facilitator while serving as the outdoor education director at River Oaks Retreat in Honea Path. While working at River Oaks, she incorporated PLT activities throughout her school field trips and camp hikes.

Clark joined the Anderson County Library's (ACL) Youth Services Department in 2018 and began renovating the children's courtyard gardens, looking for ways to connect the library resources with formal and informal environmentally minded

educators in the community. In 2019 she provided ACL reading and online resource connections for educators at an Anderson School District Five PLT training that she helped co-facilitate. She also keeps an ongoing list of new environmental education books added to the library's print collection that can accompany PLT activities.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Clark helped create a three-pack grab-and-go kit of free PLT family activities, supplies, SC PLT information and ACL Reading & Resource Connections to hand out during the library's 2021 summer reading program. A total of 250 kits were produced and distributed to all nine branches of the library in July.

Clark's background in biology and passion for sustainability has led her to become a certified SC Master Gardener, SC Beekeeper, Upstate SC Master Naturalist and SC Native Plant Society member. She is also a volunteer for SC Adopt-a-Stream and the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) and networks with service organizations such as the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC) and Clemson University Cooperative Extension.



2021 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

In 2021, 32 face-to-face and virtual professional development (PD) events were conducted with 359 participants. With two PD events covering more than one module, a total of 396 copies of the PLT modules were distributed at these PD events. The following is a breakdown of the types of PD events:

Type Of PD event	# Of PD events*	% Of PD events	# Of Participants	% Of Total Participants
Early Childhood	1	3	7	2
Pre-service Early Childhood	5	15	94	24
K-8	13	38	125	32
Pre-service K-8	11	32	94	24
All E-Unit modules	1	3	14	4
All Secondary modules	3	9	62	16
TOTALS:	34	N/A	396	N/A

* In order to show how many of each PLT module was distributed and how many PD events were conducted for each module, PD events that covered more than one module are shown as separate workshops for each module, making the total number of PD events 36.

2021 PD EVENT FACILITATORS

Beth Foley	Kelli Meeker*
Carrie Whitlock	Kimberly Fickling
Cassie Bell	Lynn Hoekstra
Darene Weatherlow*	Maria Campbell*
Dawn Stuckey	Matt Schnabel
Deanna Taylor	Patricia Whitener
Deborah Poston	Robert Carter
Diane Curlee	Sara Beth Freytag
Holly DeVault	Sharon Miller
Ingrid Norris	Stephanie Moore
Janet Steele	Tanya Towne
Jennifer Majors	Taylor Rowe
Jessica Runyon	Thea Hagan
Jimmy Walters	
John Ratterree	*Facilitator in training
Josh Castleberry	

2021 Facilitators Who Volunteered in Other Ways

Dodie Clark	Russell Hubright
Chanda Cooper	Amy Umberger
Cynthia Deaton	Rosemary Wicker
Michelle Evans	

PLT STEERING COMMITTEE

Executive Officers

- . Russell Hubright, Chair
SC Forestry Commission
- . Sarah Talley, Vice Chair
U.S. Forest Service
- . Rosemary Wicker, Secretary
University of South Carolina
- . Emily Oakman, Treasurer
Forestry Association of SC
- . Matt Schnabel, Coordinator
SC Forestry Commission

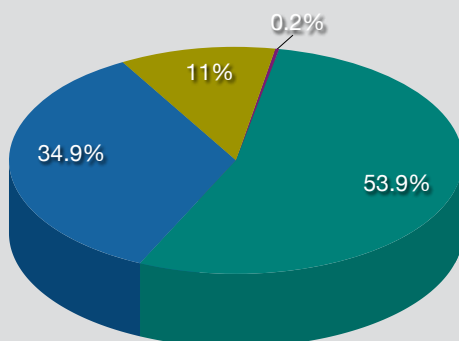
Members

- . Barbara Allen
Santee Cooper (retired)
- . Robert Carter
Museum of York County
- . Chanda Cooper
Richland County Conservation District
- . Cynthia Deaton
Clemson University
- . Beth Foley
SC Forestry Commission
- . William Keels
Clemson University
- . Gwendolyn Shealy
SC Department of Education
- . Linda Sinclair
SCDE Science Consultant (retired)
- . Tanya Towne
Laurens County School District 55
- . Amy Umberger
Lexington/Richland District Five
- . Michael Walker
International Paper

2021 SC PLT BUDGET SUMMARY

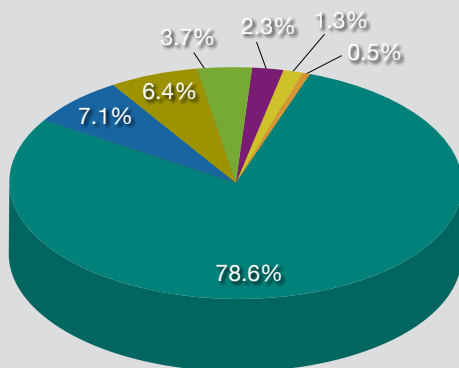
Income: \$50,166.38

Cash Balance	\$27,055.23
Grants	\$17,500.00
Corporate Donations	\$5,500.00
Workshop Fees	\$111.15
TOTAL	\$50,166.38



Expenses: \$12,748.34

Grant Expenditures	\$17,500.00
Travel	\$1,588.96
Publicity	\$1,424.92
Awards and Certificates	\$816.82
Workshop Expenses	\$521.00
Operating Expenses	\$279.68
Activity Guides	\$119.49
TOTAL	\$12,748.34



Facilitator & Steering Committee In-Kind Contributions: \$14,591.95

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

SC SFI State Implementation Committee
Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc.

SC Tree Farm Committee
International Paper

Facilitator Refreshers at Roper Mountain Science Center & Harbison State Forest



Facilitators receive a tour of the Harrison Hall of Natural Science.



Facilitators Tia Prostko, Deborah Poston, Rosemary Wicker, and Ingrid Norris break down one of the new PLT activities.



Facilitators receive a tour of the Environmental Science & Sustainability Center from Life Science Specialist Tim Taylor.



Facilitator Patricia Whitener is attacked by a tyrannosaurus rex on a trail at Roper Mountain Science Center.



HSF Recreation Specialist Brad Phillips and Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright explain management strategies near the Crooked Pine Trail.



Facilitators Diane Curlee, Hope Matthews and Holly Rose DeVault diving into a new PLT activity.



HSF Manager Trip Miller explaining the final harvest, site prep burn, and planting of a stand.



Facilitators and coordinators standing in front of a recent growing-season burn site.

What They're Saying About SC PLT PD Events...

Project Learning Tree is a great way to provide students opportunities to learn skills, concepts and content while exploring the world around them.

Mya McPhatter

Columbia International University
Education Major

Enjoyed the class! Very informative. As a novice, the training they provided made me feel comfortable about the subject being taught.

Christen Lukoski

Newberry Soil and Water
Conservation District

A great way to bring science to life for kids of all ages!

Cassie Castleberry

Liberty Steam Charter
MUMC Day School

The PLT Facilitators were wonderful, very knowledgeable and entertaining. We learned so much in a fabulous, fun way. Gracias!

**York County School
District Teacher**

Great! Wonderful job. I love how we were able to go over some of the activities. The Facilitator was thorough and knowledgeable about everything! He also made connections throughout the presentations.

Alexis Sibley

Columbia College Student

